

A Cosmopolitan Work  
In  
South America

National Board of Young Womens Christian Associations  
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## A COSMOPOLITAN WORK IN SOUTH AMERICA.

Latin America has been brought nearer the United States by the completion of the Panama Canal.

South America is a continent of republics — Brazil, Uruguay, Chile and the Argentine being the four most progressive nations.

Gathered in Buenos Aires are people from thirty nations. Among them are English, Germans, Italians, Americans, Scandinavians, Spanish, Portuguese and French. The Spanish were the earliest settlers in the country and their language is the most universally used.

Great cities like Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, Montevideo, Uruguay, Buenos Aires, Argentina and Santiago, Chile, have a splendid development, with street car systems, magnificent public buildings, parks and great business enterprises. The country, on the contrary, is controlled by vast holdings of individual proprietors. The farmer is not encouraged in securing personal holdings and the vast inland areas are sparsely settled by an ignorant and non-progressive population.

To the women of the Old World, with its social restrictions and its crowded employment, the New World offers a tempting home for freedom, for adventure, for earning a livelihood. Thousands of women come yearly to the cities of South America, seeking posts as teachers, governesses, professional nurses, artists, private secretaries, dressmakers, heads of department stores, hair dressers, milliners, office help and shop girls.

They find in the progressive cities of South America that living is extremely high, and suitable lodgings difficult to secure, yet it often happens that when a young woman comes under contract she finds the position to which she comes dissapointing or impossible, and having spent all her resources, she is homeless and friendless in an alien land.

There is an increasing number of women employed in shops. The noon recess is of two hours duration, at which time the stores are locked and young women are obliged to find recreation outside their place of employment. It is rare for shops in Buenos Aires to have a rest room for its employees.

Prevailing social and moral conditions in South America create an atmosphere of laxity in personal moral fiber. There is almost a universal divorce of morality and religion with resulting temptations difficult to combat, due to a lack of sound public opinion.

The first and only city in which work was undertaken by secretaries from the United States is Buenos Aires. Buenos Aires is a city of one and a half millions and is the largest Spanish-speaking city in the world. It is the key city of South America.

The beginnings of the Young Women's Christian Association in Buenos Aires were made in 1890, for the English speaking young women of the city. A request was sent by them to the World's Committee for an American secretary to guide and develop the Association.

In 1909 Miss Harriet Taylor, secretary of the foreign department of the National Board, was asked to visit South America by the British and American residents of the various cities. On this journey she visited Rio de Janeiro and San Paulo, Brazil; Montevideo, Uruguay; Buenos Aires and Rozario, Argentine; Santiago and Valparaiso, Chile. Each city tendered her a cordial reception and requests were made for the organization of Associations.

Since the arrival of the first secretary, Miss Jean Batty, the Association has developed steadily and has become, as is attested by the daily papers in Buenos Aires, a powerful influence in the social life of the community.

Physicians, clergymen, ship captains, consuls, merchants and officials are constantly referring young women to the care of the Association. Every day women of several nationalities find their way to the Association for advice, for companionship, and for home influence.

The Board of Management is international in its personnel and the membership includes women of twenty-three nations and numbers 550 women and subscribers. Among its activities are the regular Sunday afternoon meetings as well as a large group that attend the daily Bible readings regularly. Evening classes are difficult to organize because the young women find it inconvenient to be away from home after sunset. Educational classes include groups in the study of Spanish, English, French, cooking and First Aid. Physical work is conducted on the spacious roof garden of the Association. the employment agency includes over one hundred applications yearly. The noon luncheon is meeting the

needs of the young women from the shops and has grown to an attendance of over one hundred. Social evenings devoted to people speaking the various prevailing languages are a feature of the work. A savings bank among the membership promotes thrift.

The present home of the Association occupies thirty-four rooms which are able to accomodate nearly forty residents and a number of transient guests. This international family includes women from inland places, travelers who are met and directed to their destinations, and women in employment.

The local Association carries a yearly budget of \$26,000. The support of American secretaries, only, is supplied by the United States.

One third of the work is conducted in the Spanish language. Two of the secretaries are Spanish-speaking. One of them, Miss Cortez, is a Mexican, and one, Miss Gilles, a Uruguayan. Both are graduates of the Training School. Miss Breed is now general secretary and Miss Sheppard, who was two years associate secretary, is now in the United States on furlough.

A larger staff of secretaries is greatly needed for the growing work and a permanent building for the work is imperative. Urgent requests are in hand for secretaries for Rio de Janeiro, the caqital city of Brazil, and for Montevideo, a city scarcely less in importance than Buenos Aires. The new relationship of friendship between North and South America makes imperative our response to these appeals.

